



The USCGC Tashoma, a 70-foot premier operational endurance cutter, has now arrived at its new port at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

[Staff photo by Rich Beauchesne](#)

The ship has come in

By Elizabeth Kenny

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PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD - Across the river from Portsmouth, a massive white ship floats alongside the shipyard, adding an even higher presence of Coast Guard security and delivering 100 new crew members and their family to the Seacoast area.

The Tahoma, a 270-foot cutter, will make the shipyard its official homeport this Saturday.

Both the Tahoma and the Campbell, another cutter similar to the Tahoma, leave their homeport of New Bedford, Mass., to move to the Seacoast area, where they will continue to be to ensure life and safety at

sea, but also protect the nation's ports from a terrorist attack.

"It's a different world now," said Commanding Officer Anne Ewalt about the post 9/11 world.

The Tahoma was the first major U.S. military asset on the scene after the attacks on the World Trade Center, taking charge of more than 30 other cutters and small boats patrolling New York harbor, protecting lower Manhattan and establishing security zones.

Ewalt said while the security on board, across the country and within the shipyard has changed in two years, the mission will

remain the same - "We're still here and we'll still patrolling the same area."

While the Tahoma and its crew will continue to travel for six weeks at a time along the coast, the four weeks in which the crew returns between tasks to repair and refuel will bring them home to the Portsmouth area.

"All I've heard so far are great things," Ewalt said about her crew's reaction to changing ports. "We have crew members living here (in military housing), Dover, Durham, Kittery Point, South Berwick, Eliot, Berwick, Rye and Hampton."

Although the crew and their families have spread themselves throughout the entire area, Ewalt said the relationship between crew members is something many wouldn't be able to understand unless they lived on the water for six weeks at a time with the same people.

"There's a specific word in the dictionary, and it's called shipmate," Ewalt said, a Coast Guard officer for 19 years.

Living on a cutter means eating whatever is served, sleeping in bunks and having only a locker as personal space, but it also means sharing moments of beauty and triumph with others.

"We've seen each other in the morning when we've only gotten a few hours sleep; we've seen each other sick on a hard day at sea, but we've also seen a beautiful morning sunrise together," Ewalt said. "You begin to form friendships that last a lifetime."

Whether its a friendship or sheer respect for each other, it can be seen while walking through the ship.

Each crew member pauses as Ewalt walks through, and she acknowledges each.

"It's small enough to get to know everyone's name," Ewalt said. "You're side by side with each other each day."

Working in close quarters with the same people also allows crew members to watch each other grow.

"It's fun to watch a crew member right out of boot camp and halfway through their first patrols, they're salty," Ewalt said with a smile.